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NEW STANDARDS FOR EXCELLENCE:

TEACHER CERTIFICATION IN ALABAMA

INTRODUCTION

by
Foster Watkins

This issue of the *Capstone Quarterly Journal* focuses upon a very timely topic. It gives special attention to the significant step taken by the State Board of Education in its last meeting of 1978 when, on December 19, the Board approved unanimously the revised standards and procedures relative to teacher preparation, certification, and program approval. The approval of this document represents another meaningful attainment in the State Board's continuing efforts to implement fully the intent of the now famous series of resolutions which first passed in January 1972, signaling the beginning of comprehensive movements to improve the quality of teachers in the classrooms of Alabama schools.

The issue will present two major review points: three of the individuals who performed leadership roles in the challenging and demanding process of developing the document have been requested to review reflectively the events from their perspectives. Because of their unique knowledge of and association with the process, the following individuals have been invited to participate as contributors to this publication: Mr. Victor Poole, State Board of Education member from District V which includes Tuscaloosa County; Dean M. L. Roberts, Associate Dean of the Capstone College of Education; and Dr. Truman M. Pierce, Dean Emeritus of the School of Education at Auburn University. Second, four members of the Capstone College of Education faculty have addressed some of the future implementation implications of the document. Drs. Carrel Anderson, Mike Palardy, Arthur Miller, and Ronnie Stanford have given consideration to aspects of the revised document which have immediate implications for College of Education programs.

Mr. Victor Poole discusses his longstanding interest in improving teacher preparation as a major avenue leading to the ultimate improvement of the educational opportunities provided for boys and girls in Alabama. Working with the advise and counsel of Dean Paul Orr of the Capstone College of Education, Mr. Poole drafted the first set of resolutions in 1971 which were to be ultimately passed by the State Board of Education on January 25, 1972. His continuing interest in extending the intent of those resolutions into operational reality has been a major factor in providing the needed support for Dr. Wayne Teague in his role as State Superintendent in developing the necessary implementation steps and procedures.

The College's own Dean M. L. Roberts, perhaps more than any other single individual, has participated significantly in the upgrading of

teacher preparation and certification standards and procedures through the years in Alabama. Dr. Roberts served as the secretary with major editing responsibilities for the Committee which drafted the 1966 *Bulletin*. It was fitting that the professional education community should have turned to him again in 1974 to serve as Chairman of the Committee which guided the development of the new document. Dean Roberts has served with distinction in this demanding position representing The University of Alabama in a most appropriate manner. In his article, Dean Roberts discusses the processes spanning these two developments from historical and comparative perspectives.

For twenty years before his retirement in 1974, Dr. Truman M. Pierce had served as Dean of the School of Education at Auburn University. In that role he had always been on the forefront of efforts to improve the quality of teacher preparation in the State. Dean Pierce continued to serve as a member of the Task Force after his official retirement. With his increased availability, he subsequently agreed to chair a small writing and editing committee. This group, under his coordination, drafted a document which reflected the broad-based concerns and inputs which had contributed to the basic data base of the project. In his article for the *Journal*, he discusses some of the underlying philosophical principles and assumptions which guided the committee's decision-making deliberations.

The new standards call for a division of basic teacher preparation program according to four levels as contrasted to the former three levels. Early Childhood (K-3), Elementary (3-6), Middle/Junior (6-9), and Secondary (9-12) are the new preparation categories. This change has widespread implications for institutions across the State and for the University. Dr. Mike Palardy, Chairperson of Early Childhood and Elementary Education, has addressed the programmatic implications for our currently operational programs in Early Childhood and Elementary Education. Dr. Arthur Miller, who is chairperson of a task force within the Area of Curriculum and Instruction which is in the process of planning for the addition of a Middle/Junior High Program, discusses the status of those efforts. Dr. Miller recently spent a sabbatical semester preparing himself to provide leadership to the development of a Middle/Junior High Program at the Capstone.

The standards support significantly the trend in teacher education toward field-based, clinically-oriented preparation programs. Dr. Ronnie Stanford, Director of Undergraduate Clinical Experiences, has reviewed in his article the document with special attention given to this dimension.

A component of the standards includes the

question of the common strands which undergird professional teacher education. In his role as Associate Dean for Undergraduate Program, Dr. Carrel Anderson has considered the implications in the document for coordination of common experiences across teacher preparation programs. He has given special attention to the effort already underway in the College for the utilization of a series of Education Colloquia as a means of responding to this aspect of the new standards. His article also contains new program requirements from the National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) and the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS), two accrediting agencies which monitor the programs in the College.

The document describes in a comprehensive manner the need for quality teacher preparation programs. The University, along with the other institutions which prepare teachers in Alabama, is going to have to take a careful look at the extent to which current and future programs meet the strenuous standards which are specified. If the intent of the document is fully realized, the era of overextended and underfunded programs of teacher preparation will become a part of the history of Alabama, not a part of the present or its future.
